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TAGS: PREL KPKO UN NP

SUBJECT: NEPAL: POST RECOMMENDS NARROW UNMIN EXTENSION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Randy W. Berry. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During the upcoming discussions on UNMIN's future, Post recommends that the U.S. Government support another mandate extension, with a focus on its core mission: the management of arms and armed personnel. UNMIN's current, wide-ranging political activities, taken without Council endorsement, are generally not helpful to the peace process. Similarly, we do not believe that expanding UNMIN's political mandate -- an idea floated by the U.K. -- would be effective.

The Council should request UNMIN to plan for the end of its mission by July 2010, including demanding a transition plan for arms monitoring. Given the Government of India's critical role in Nepal, we recommend consultations with New Delhi on UNMIN's future. Core country team has approved this recommendation. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) This cable presents Post's views on the extension of UNMIN's mandate, which expires on January 23, 2010. UNMIN Representative Karin Landgren told Charge that the Secretary General would present his report on January 11, and that the Council debate would take place on January 15 or 18. The Government of Nepal (GON) typically presents its views on UNMIN extension very late. According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Acting Joint Secretary Rudra Nepal, the GON will likely follow the same pattern and make its request 10-15 days before the Council meeting.

Refocus on Arms Monitoring Role

¶3. (C) In the original UNSCR resolution creating UNMIN (UNSCR 1740 (2007)), the Security Council tasked UNMIN with four narrow tasks: monitoring the management of arms and armed personnel, assisting the parties through a Joint Monitoring Coordinating Committee in implementing their agreements on arms and armed personnel, assisting in monitoring the ceasefire, and providing technical support for the elections. The final task -- elections -- were successfully held in April 2008, and UNMIN continues to do a relatively effective job on the other three tasks.

¶4. (C) However, UNMIN has not restricted its activities to

the 1740 mandate, but instead plays a very active role in larger political issues. UNMIN Representative Karin Landgren meets regularly with the Prime Minister, Maoist leader Dahal "Prachanda," and other political leaders, and discusses larger peace process issues, such as the integration of Maoist combatants, the creation of a "High-Level Political Mechanism," and constitution drafting. Landgren is regarded by some as the "UN Ambassador" in Nepal, similar to the role an SRSG might play in a larger UN Mission with a robust political mandate.

UNMIN's Political Role Not Useful

¶15. (C) Post's general view is that UNMIN's (and Landgren's) activist role -- an Indian diplomat called it "mission creep" -- has not advanced the peace process. UNMIN is perceived as biased toward the Maoists, a perception that stretches back to UNMIN's role in the verification of Maoist combatants. (In a recently-surfaced video, Maoist leader Prachanda brags about tricking UNMIN into accepting 19,000 Maoist combatants, when they only had 7,000.) The controversy over the Secretary General's latest report on Nepal -- which essentially recommended including the Maoists in government -- only reinforced this view.

¶16. (S/NF) UN Representative Landgren is also perceived by many Nepali actors as pro-Maoist. While we believe her views have shifted somewhat in recent months following broken promises by the Maoist leadership, her public statements tend to favor the Maoists. Even if the UN is given or continues

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to play a political role, Landgren may not be the right person for the job.

¶17. (C) The Government of Nepal's ruling coalition, led by the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML) and Nepali Congress, does not trust UNMIN and regularly criticizes Landgren's public statements. We doubt the GON would ask for or support expanding UNMIN's mandate. Our Nepali political contacts generally distrust UNMIN, and an expanded mandate would likely be criticized in the press.

Wider Mandate Not Advisable

¶18. (C) Given that UNMIN's current political actions are largely ineffective or counterproductive, we would caution against providing UNMIN with an explicit political mandate in the UNMIN extension, as the U.K. and perhaps the Chinese are considering. It would be very difficult, probably impossible, for UNMIN to serve as a credible, neutral facilitator of political talks. An added UNSC endorsement of a political role will not repair its credibility. Furthermore, the main government coalition partners, the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist and Nepali Congress, do not trust UNMIN and would likely resist a broader mandate. Instead of expanding UNMIN's mandate, we recommend minimizing UNMIN's current political activities, such as reducing the budget for the non-core mandate functions, using the UNSC debate to remind UNMIN about its mandate, sending a new "neutral" representative, seeking a specific request for a phase down plan, or other actions.

India's Key Role

¶19. (C) The Government of India (GOI) remains the most important external political factor in Nepal, and played the critical role in negotiating the 2005-2006 peace agreements. New Delhi has never warmed to UNMIN, and it is unlikely that they would support a wider political mandate. In our view, UNMIN cannot effectively influence the peace process without active GOI support. Post recommends that USUN, New Delhi and the Department consult with GOI officials to solicit its views on UNMIN extension. British Ambassador to Nepal Andrew Hall, for example, reported that India's envoy to Nepal, Rakesh Sood, "laughed at him" when Hall raised the idea of a

broader political mandate for UNMIN.

Timing

¶10. (C) We do not have a strong view on the length of the mandate, but believe that three months is a very short amount of time and would make UNMIN planning challenging. The May 28, 2010 deadline for drafting a new constitution could be a key date in the peace process, and a six-month extension would carry UNMIN through that sensitive period.

Credible UNMIN End Date, Request Transition Plan

¶11. (C) Post suggests that the Council lay the groundwork for the end of UNMIN's mandate by July 2010. Given the regular mandate rollovers, this threat may not be credible, but perhaps the Council could set concrete benchmarks for extension, such as progress on integration of Maoist combatants, or request UNMIN to provide an arms monitoring transition plan with the interim report. UNMIN's four international arms monitors in each Maoist cantonment may offer a "security blanket," but it also allows the parties, especially the Maoists, to procrastinate on the integration and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants. We believe that a credible UNMIN drawdown plan could spur movement on the Maoist combatant issue.

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